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RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

[on the report of the Sixth Committee (A/51/625)]

51/158. Electronic treaty database

The General Assembly,

Conscious of the obligations resulting from Article 102 of the Charter of the United Nations and the importance of treaties in the development of international law and the international legal order,

Noting that the recent expansion of the membership of the Organization, combined with an increase in international treaty-making activity, has led to the growth in the volume of work carried out by the Treaty Section of the Office of Legal Affairs of the Secretariat and contributed to the accumulation of unpublished treaties,

Recognizing, consistent with the obligation contained in Article 102 of the Charter, the importance of the expeditious processing, registration and publication of treaties and treaty-related actions,

Welcoming the range of measures already taken by the Treaty Section to expedite the publication of the United Nations Treaty Series and to provide electronic access to the publication Multilateral Treaties Deposited with the Secretary-General through the Internet,

Desirous that all efforts are made to ensure that the Treaty Section develops a comprehensive electronic database containing all treaty depositary and registration information,

Noting the steps taken by the Ad Hoc Open-Ended Working Group on Informatics established by the Economic and Social Council to harmonize and improve United Nations information systems for optimal utilization and accessibility by all Member States,

Noting also that the existing and proposed Internet access to United Nations treaty publications is and will be in addition to the hard-copy printed versions of such publications,

1. Welcomes the statement of objective of developing a comprehensive electronic database containing all depositary and registration information and disseminating electronically treaties and treaty law-related information from the database, including through on-line access, as contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Decade of International Law;[1]

2. Recalls the request of the Legal Counsel that in order to expedite the registration and publication of treaties all Member States should submit treaty texts in disk or other electronic format in addition to the certified print copy;

3. Requests the Secretary-General to continue to give priority to the implementation of the computerization programme in the Treaty Section of the Office of Legal Affairs of the Secretariat;

4. Calls upon the Secretary-General to ensure that all necessary support is provided to expedite the publication of the printed version of the United Nations Treaty Series through the prompt provision of the necessary equipment and translation services;

5. Endorses the proposed Internet dissemination of the United Nations Treaty Series, following the same rules applicable to the printed version of the publication, in addition to the current access to the Multilateral Treaties Deposited with the Secretary-General, and recognizes that Internet access to treaties and treaty law-related information is particularly valuable in countries where the cost of maintaining complete collections of treaties in bound volume form is relatively high;

6. Also endorses the Secretary-General's exploring of the economic and practical feasibility of recovering the costs of providing such Internet access to the United Nations Treaty Series and the Multilateral Treaties Deposited with the Secretary-General, subject to Member States, organizations of the United Nations system, other international organizations and other non-commercial users not being charged a user fee, and presenting his findings to Member States;

7. Invites the Secretary-General to consider the possibility of translating the list of titles of treaties appearing in the publication Multilateral Treaties Deposited with the Secretary-General into the other official languages of the United Nations and disseminating such lists via the Internet, and to submit a report to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session;

8. Invites the specialized agencies of the United Nations system, other international organizations and Member States with depositary functions for multilateral treaties to use their best endeavours to provide Internet access to treaties and treaty law-related information as soon as practicable.

85th plenary meeting
16 December 1996

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[1] A/51/278, para. 91.